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P.O. Box 1047, Geelong

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Editorial

We have a wonderful mix of material in the winter 1990 *Geelong Naturalist.* Craig Morley's scholarly survey of the birds of Eastern Park, which now spans ten years, is continued and includes new breeding records. No less valuable is the short contribution from Don Greaves about Little Egrets. Roy Whiteside has provided a transcript from the recorded tape of the speaker's address at one of our General Meetings. So much wonderful information is presented at our meetings that it is a pity not to pass it on to all members, and we thank Roy for his work. We hope to publish more in the future.

The account of the birds of Iron Range is very relevant, for next year the Club hopes to mount an excursion to Cape York. Plans are well under way, and the Committee should be contacted for details. The article about the birds of Darwin may well stimulate members to ask for a tour to the Northern Territory to be arranged.

Nearer to home, "Night-time at the Common" should make us all realise what a great deal is offered the nature watcher close to Geelong. Did you know that tourists come to our region to see such things, and that the congregations of wading birds at the Geelong salt works or Swan Bay or Mud Islands are nationally, and in some cases, internationally famous?

Then again, Lou Lane reminds us that we don't have to go further than our own garden to experience the wonders of nature.

Don't forget to have a go at the Junior Quiz on page - . If you have read your copy of *From Buckleys to the Break* the answers should be relatively easy. The book is still available for purchase from the Club Treasurer.

Valda Dedman

The Birds of Eastern Park, Geelong: Noteworthy Breeding Events II.

by Craig Morley

During November and December 1989 a number of important and interesting observations were recorded in Eastern Park. in this article, they are detailed; some are put in an historical context and a review of the species recorded breeding in the park is made.

Buff-banded Rail Rallus philippensis

On 20th December during a birdwatching session, run as part of an end of year activities programme for Geelong High School students, several students excitedly remarked about birds which had been disturbed near the Institute of Educational Administration (I.E.A.) Lagoon. I managed to obtain a glimpse of two dark birds running for cover into a reed bed. One of the boys commented that one of the birds he saw "had the colors of the rainbow". These sightings were made at approximately 1130 hrs.

I returned to the lagoon later at 1630 on the same day and was rewarded with a very clear view of an adult Buff-banded Rail quietly and carefully feeding in the open on the mown grass.

On 22nd December at 1600 hrs, I checked the lagoon again and was delighted to find two adult Buff-Banded rails feeding on open ground, with two downy black-grey chicks, in the shade of the reeds on the east side of the main lagoon.

On 2nd January 1990 at least two adults were recorded and on 25th January one adult was seen at the lagoon.

These important observations constitute the first sight record and breeding record for the Buff-banded Rail in the Eastern Park since Belcher (1914) wrote "They rested for years in long grass near the now dry pond in the Eastern Park. One cat was, I know, responsible for at least three of these birds".

Dusky Moorhen Gallinula tenebrosa

During the GFNC Bird Group excursion to the Park in 11th November 1989, one moorhen was observed at the lagoon. The first record for this species in the park. Subsequent observations were as follows:

18 December - one at lagoon
20 December 1100 - one juvenile (adult size)
20 December 1630 - one adult, two juveniles (adult size) and one chick
22 December - one adult, one juvenile and a chick (fed by juvenile)
2 January (1990) - at least one adult and one juvenile with two chicks and an

immature (with pale red and yellow beak and shield markings)
25 January - two juveniles (approx two thirds adult size), one immature and an adult.

These observations at the lagoon indicate that Dusky Moorhens bred at least once if not twice during the spring and summer of 1989-90. This is the first breeding record of this species in Eastern Park.

Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike Coracina novaehollandiae

In February 1983, on the basis of four years survey of the park, I classified the Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike as "Uncommon, one to three birds on odd occasions" (Morley, 1983).

After ten years study it is now apparent that the presence of this species within the Park is seasonal, (Table 1). The seasonal variation in the occurrence of the Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike is highly significant ($X^2 = 12.27$ $p < 0.01$). The higher occurrence in Spring (observed on 18 visits in 38) and lesser occurrence in Winter (observed on 2 visits in 33) is therefore not due to chance alone and does reflect a seasonal movement by this species in the district (Pescott 1983).

In the light of these findings, it is interesting to note that breeding of this species in the Park was confirmed with the observation of an adult feeding a very recently fledged down-covered young on 11 November 1989.

TABLE 1

Seasonal occurrence of the Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, in Eastern Park during 185 visits form December 1979 to January 1990.

Season	Autumn	Winter	Spring	Summer
Percentage of visits when species recorded.	21.4	6.1	47.4	32.8
Total number of visits	56	33	38	58

Prior to this date, independent juvenile birds had been recorded on 17 November 1985 and 17 December 1987 and on 20 September 1986, at least one bird of a pair was observed carrying what appeared to be nesting material into the Spotted Gum *Eucalyptus Maculata,* in the Botanical Gardens.

Clamorous Reed-Warbler Acrocephalus stentoreus

Reed-warblers at the I.E.A. lagoon first came to my attention during the GFNC Bird Group excursion on 11 November 1989. At least two were seen and several others were vocal in the reed beds. It was interesting to notice a single bird apparently foraging in several eucalypts at the edge of the lagoon. I have noted this behavior on several subsequent visits.

The observation on 11 November was the first record of this species for the park and the presence of the birds at the lagoon on 18, 29, 22 December and 2 and 25 January and 3 February 1990 indicate that the species has been resident at the lagoon over this period. During this time no nests or dependent young were recorded, though several territorial chases involving two single birds were observed and birds carrying food into reed beds were noted once or twice. It seems reasonable to assume from these pieces of evidence that this species probably bred at the lagoon during this period.

Striated Thornbill Acanthiza lineata

On 11 November, during the Bird Group excursion, two fledglings were observed being fed by at least three adult birds in an area of the park approximately 100m from the northern boundary of the Botanical Gardens. Then on 20 December, in the native section of the Botanical Gardens, at least one adult was observed with two juveniles. On this occasion the young were mainly feeding independently of the adult, but were still begging and occasionally were fed by the adult. As the Striated Thornbills foraged amongst the shrubs and small trees they were followed by a pair of Brown Thornbills *Acanthiza pusila*. These observations constitute the first record of Striated Thornbills breeding in the Park.

The first record of the Striated Thornbill in the park was of a single bird, on 17 July 1983 (during a GFNC excursion), feeding in Acacias with three Silvereyes *Zosterops lateralis* and two or three Yellow Thornbills *Acanthiza nana* near the entrance to the Botanical Gardens.

From this date until 16 December 1987 no Striated Thornbills were observed during 123 visits to the Park. On 16, 17 December 1987 at least two birds were observed foraging in Acaclas and Eucalypts in the vicinity of the Gardens and on the 20th March 1988, at least four were observed feeding in and around the Gardens.

During four other visits to the Park in the period 16 December 1987 to 11 November 1989, this species was not recorded.

Discussion

In the period November 1989 to January 1990, three species have been confirmed breeding in Eastern Park for the first time and one species (Buff-banded Rail) has been recorded breeding for the first time in over seventy years. During this time the Clamorous Reed-Warbler probably bred.

Over the period from December 1979 to January 1990, thirty one species (Table 2) have been recorded breeding in the Park, including three species which have attempted to breed. (Rufous Night Heron, Galah and Laughing Kookaburra). Previously I have not differentiated the Laughing Kookaburra as a species which has attempted to breed (see Table 2, Morley 1983 and also Morley 1987) and so it should have been concluded (Morley 1987) that 25 species had bred. In view of the attempted breeding by the Rufous Night Heron and Galah, for consistency it seems reasonable to clarify the Laughing Kookaburra as having attempted to bred, in recent years, in the Park, (see Text) Morley 1983).

Four species have probably bred (Table 3) in the Park from December 1979 to January 1990 and further observation is needed to confirm this.

It is interesting to note the establishment of the Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike and Striated Thornbill, as breeding species in the Park and it is pleasing to record that recently established lagoon (Figures 1-4) at the I.E.A. has played an important role in attracting two and probably three new species to the Park to breed.

Species such as the Buff-banded Rail, Dusky Moorhen and Clamorous Reed-Warbler are clearly dependent on the lagoon for breeding habitat. This habitat would in fact be more attractive and secire for the birds of these improvements were made :- i) the main pond was enlarged and possibly deepened. ii) the canal, particularly around the west side of the island was widened and deepened, so that the island was in fact surrounded by water. iii) the island was planted with a number of eucalypts and the grass was left to grow to give ground-dwelling birds more protection and shelter.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank those students of Geelong High School who particiapted in the bird watching activity on 20 December 1989. Their keeness and enthusiasm certainly made a significant contribution to the re-discovery of Buff-banded Rails breeding in Eastern Park.

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Table 2

Species which have bred in Eastern Park (December 1979 to January 1990)
(including those which have attempted to breed +)
31 species in all.

* Recorded breeding by Charles Belcher (1887 - 1912)

+ Rufous Night Heron	*Nycticorax caledonicus*
Australian Hobby	*Falco longipennis*
* Buff-banded Rail	*Rallus philippensis*
Dusky Moorhen	*Gallinula tenebrosa*
Masked Lapwing	*Vanellus miles*
Feral Pigeon	*Columba livia*
Spotted Turtle-Dove	*Streptopelia chinensis*
+ Galah	*Cacatua roseicapilla*
* Shining Bronze-cuckoo	*Chrysococcyx lucidus*
* Laughing Kookaburra	*Dacelo novaehollandiae*
* Welcome Swallow	*Hirundo neoxena*
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	*Coracina novaehollandiae*
Blackbird	*Turdus merula*
* Grey Fantail	*Rhipidura fulginosa*
* Willie Wagtail	*Rhipidura leucophrys*
* White-browed Scrub-wren	*Sericornis frontalis*
* Brown Thornbill	*Acanthiza pusilla*
* Yellow-rumped Thornbill	*Acanthiza chrysorrhoa*
* Yellow Thornbill	*Acanthiza nana*
Striated Thornbill	*Acanthiza lineata*
* Red Wattlebird	*Anthochaera carunculata*
* New Holland Honeyeater	*Phylidonyris novaehollandiae*
* Silvereye	*Zosterops lateralis*
European Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduslis*
European Greenfinch	*Carduelis chloris*
House Sparrow	*Passer domesticus*
Common Starling	*Sturnus vulgaris*
* Australian Magpie-Lark	*Grallina cyanoleuca*
Grey Butcherbird	*Cracticus torquatus*
* Australian Magpie	*Gymnorhina tibicen*
Little Raven	*Corvus mellori*

Student Participants

Ivan Brandich
Andrew Elkington
Marty Loader
Angelo Napoli
Darren Olsen
Tony Puliafoto
Andrew Thorp

Table 3

Species which have probably bred in Eastern Park in period December 1979 to January 1990 (evidence is cited but confirmation is needed)

* Recorded breeding by Charled Belcher (1887 - 1912)

Skylark *Aluada arvensis*	Territorial singing while hovering suitable habitat during a number of spring/summer periods
* Scarlet Robin *Petroica mulitcolor*	Pair and immature present during Dec. 1980 (Morley 1983).
* Rufous Whistler *Pachycephala rufiventris*	Pair present in same area for three weeks in spring 1985. Male (immature) calling strongly and female seen frequently (Morley 1986).
Clamorous Reed-Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus*	See entry this article
Spotted Pardalote *Pardalotus punctatus*	Pair and immature on 10 April 1982 (Morley 1983) and pair collecting dried grass (nest lining) from edge of path in Botanic Gardens 28 June 1986.

Photos showing development of Institute of Educational Administration Lagoon, in Eastern park (Jan 1983 to Jan 1990)

Figure 1 January 1983 view to north west over main lagoon towards East Geelong Golf Clubhouse, during construction.

Figure 2 October 1984 view to south west over main lagoon. South end of island to right of figure.

Figure 3 June 1985 view to south west over main lagoon showing progress of November/December 1984 plantings.

Figure 4 May 1990 view over main lagoon to the north east showing part of the reed-bed which gave protection to Dusty Moorhens, Buff banded-rails and Reed Warblers during spring and summer 1989-1990 (see text).

Night-time on the Common

by Ray Baverstock and Grant Baverstock

The Inverleigh Common Flora and Fauna Reserve can be a magical place at night and on a warm evening in January 1990 we were able to experience some of this magic.

Grant was doing a bat survey and after the trip lines had been set on a fire dam we settled down to watch the birds come into drink before darkness fell.

There had been no rain for some time and a dam at the eastern end of the common was dry, leaving only three other drinking places left on the common.

At the western end if the dam is a large Bull Ants nest and ants were moving back and forth along the southern bank in a long stream leading into the bush.

As we waited Eastern Rosellas flew over whilst White-plumed Honeyeaters came in to drink. A Common Bronzewing landed on the raised bank of the dam and was soon joined by five others, and a flock of Red-rumped Parrots flew past.

The noise of a juvenile bird calling from across the road had us puzzled until we investigated and found it was a juvenile Laughing Kookaburra. Soon other Kookaburras started their evening chorus.

A family of Eastern Yellow Robins came down to drink and three Red-browed Firetails flitted through the branches of a shrub alongside us. Some Yellow-faced Honeyeaters also came to drink. Although they are usually winter visitors to the Geelong area a number have been present at the Common all summer.

As we waited beside the cars a pair of Swamp Wallabies *Wallabia bicolor* came to drink, seemingly unperturbed by our presence. Later another pair came in and although some Eastern Grey Kangaroos *Macropus giganteus* came close they were too shy to drink.

As darkness fell we moved closer to the triplines. A Southern Boobook flew onto a branch of a dead wattle just above our heads, took one look at us and flew silently away.

As it grew darker the first bat flew over and soon one hit a trip wire and struck the water but managed to fly off again. Not long after one was in the water and the spotlight revealed it swimming for the far bank. Grant soon scooped it out of the water and had it in the holding bag. Bats are excellent swimmers and trip lining is a productive way of catching them.

A White-striped Mastiff Bat *Tadarida australis* roared by as we waited. This bat flies quite fast and sounds like calico being ripped. It is also one of the few bats that are audible to adult humans ears.

A scrabbling sound in the trees behind us led us to search with the spotlight until we found it to be caused by a family of Sugar Gliders *Petaurus breviceps.* During the night we also heard Brush-tailed Possums *Trichosurus vulpecula* and Ring-tailed Possums *Pseudocheirus peregrinus* and Koalas *Phascolarctos cinereus* grunting.

A total of eight bats of four different species was caught. Some of these were pregnant females which were measured and weighed and released immediately so that their feeding pattern would not be interrupted.

As a near full moon rose the activity quietened down. Moonlight nights are not usually very productive as it is possible that the bats can see the trip-lines, certainly we could see them shining in the moonlight, and also bats are more visible to predators and therefore may be less inclined to venture out.

Kangaroos were still thumping about in the bush and at 2230 hrs a pair of Australian Shelducks called as they flew over. At least four Owlet Nightjars were heard and just before we packed up at 2330 hrs a Southern Boobook started calling nearby and another was heard in the distance. A Willie Wagtail was calling during the night and on other visits to the Common we have also heard Pallid Cuckoos calling late at night.

As we left, the Bull Ants were still streaming into the bush. Although the number of bats caught was not great, the sight and sounds of the birds and mammals and the beauty of the bush on a moonlit night all combined to make it a magical moment for us and one that will long be remembered.

The handling of protected bats were conducted under a permit issued by the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands.

TABLE 1

Details of Bats Captured

Species	Sex	Forearm Measurement	Weight Details
Chalinolobus gouldii		45.9 mm	18 g Preg.
Chalinolobus gouldii		46.5 mm	19 g Preg.
Eptesicus darlingtoni		34.8 mm	7.5 g
Eptesicus regulus		33.8 mm	9 g Preg.
Eptesicus regulus		32.7 mm	8.5 g Preg.
Eptesicus regulus		33.5 mm	8 g Preg.
Eptesicus vulturnus		29.3 mm	5 g Preg.
Eptesicus vulturnus		29.1 mm	4.5 g

(Preg. means pregnant)

TABLE 2

Mammals Recorded for the Night

Tadarida australis - White Striped Mastiff Bat
Chalinolobus gouldii - Gould's Wattled Bat
Eptesicus darlingtoni - Large Forest Eptesicus
Eptesicus regulus - King River Eptesicus
Eptesicus vulturnus - Little River Eptesicus
Phascolarctos cinereus - Koala
Pseudocheirus peregrinus - Common Ringtail Possum
Petaurus breviceps - Sugar Glider
Trichosurus vulpecula - Common Brushtail Possum
Wallabia Bicolor - Swamp Wallaby
Macropus giganteus - Eastern Grey Kangaroo

TABLE 3

Birds Observed

Eastern Rosella - *Platycercus eximius*
White-plumed Honeyeater - *Lichenostomus penicillatus*
Red Wattlebird - *Anthochaera carunculata*
New Holland Honeyeater - *Phylidonyris novaehollandiae*
Common Bronzewing - *Phaps chalcoptera*
Striated Pardalote - *Pardalotus striatus*
Blackbird - *Turdus merula*
Willie Wagtail - *Rhipidura leucophrys*
Long-billed Corella - *Cacatua tenuirostris*
Australian Magpie - *Gymnorhina tibicen*
Red-rumped Parrot - *Psephotus haemotonotus*
Laughing Kookaburra - *Dacelo novaeguineae*
Eastern Yellow Robin - *Eopsaltria australis*
Black Faced Cuckoo Shrike - *Coracina novaehollandiae*
Red-browed Firetail - *Emblema temporalis*
Yellow-faced Honeyeater - *Lichenostomus chrysops*
Grey Shrike-thrush - *Colluricincla harmonica*
Brown Thornbill - *Acanthiza pusilla*
Superb Fairy Wren - *Malarus cyaneus*
Crested Shriketit - *Falcunculus frontatus*
Little Raven - *Corvus mellori*
Southern Boobook - *Ninox novaeseelandiae*
Australian Shelduck - *Tadorna tadornoides*

AUTHORS NOTE: Since the visit mentioned in this article almost one seventh of the Inverleigh Common has been burnt in a controlled burn, which appears to have been of low intensity. The fire dam and surrounding area lies within the burnt area. So far we have been unable to assess the effect if any this fire has had on the bird and mammal life of the area. Hopefully the fire will assist in the formation of tree hollows and regeneration of plant life in the area, which had not been burnt for many years.

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Little Egrets at Corio

by Donald Greaves

Little Egrets have been found throughout Europe, Africa and Asia.

In Australia their range has only started to grow since 1901. Until 1939 the species was not recorded as breeding as far south as the Murray River.

Until 1960 the Little Egret was virtually unknown in the Geelong area. It was first recorded on 1st September 1960 at Kirks Point, and again in 4th November 1962. Regular sightings began in the 1970's and it was first observed at Geelong Grammar School in 1980. It was not until 1986 that I found evidence of the birds nesting in Cypress trees on the beach front.

In 1986 egg shells were found under trees and in 1987 four young birds were found dead under the same trees, It appeared they had fallen out of a nest. Nesting in 1988 produced 15 young, with numbers increasing in 1989 to 25 young. Breeding commenced in December through to February with the peak in mid January

During the breeding season, adult birds were seen feeding in Limeburners Lagoon at Avalon beach usually at low tide. By early March the young birds had started to disperse. Some of the adult birds have been sighted during the winter months.

Donald Greaves
Geelong Grammar School
Corio

JUNIOR QUIZ

The answers to these questions can be found in the book, "*From Buckleys to the Break*", which was published by the Geelong Field Naturalists Club. If you don't have your own copy, the book is available in the Club library.

1. What does the title of the book mean?
2. What is the name of the aboriginal tribe who lived near the Barwon River?
3. What do the flowers of the Tree Violet look like?
4. Name two aquatic mammals which may be found in the Barwon River.
5. What is eel-fare?
6. What did Balyang Sanctuary take its name from?
7. What was the aboriginal name of Buckley Falls?
8. Where are you likely to see Rainbow Lorikeets along the Barwon River?
9. Which fish species was recently rediscovered as a breeding species near Buckleys Falls?
10. Where might you find Australasian Grebes nesting near the Barwon?
11. Of what rocks are the Barrabool Hills composed?
12. What is tangled lingum?
13. What is a pebblebonk?
14. Where can you find creeping mistletoe along the Barwon River?
15. Where would you look for dolomedes
16. Where do Cattle Egrets roost locally?

Mystery Photograph Solution

The picture in the last issue was of a puff ball opening to release its spores, which are microscopic and and may number millions.

Travelling North

by Joe Robinson

On Monday morning at seven o'clock the promenade along the foreshore in Cairns was scattered with bird watchers and binoculars. The weather in February is hot and steamy, but a big plus in the large number of migatory wading birds that can be seen, mostly at close range. A Laughing Gull had been seen the previous evening, one of the second such sightings in Australia, and sure enough it was there in the morning, one-legged and brown-backed. Three species of sandpiper, five species of tern. Eastern Curlew, Little Curlew and spoonbill were all there, with Masked-mongolian and Red-capped Plovers.

Before getting on our plane at 9.30 a.m. for Lockhart River, we had seen about thirty-four species of wading birds, plus Peaceful Doves, Rainbow Bee-eaters, Sacred Kingfishers and a number of honeyeaters. Our sixteen seater plane was an Embraier Bandierante, a Brazilian export that is now ousting American and British planes, and Australian Nomads, from many parts of the world. We cruised at nine thousand feet over the Great Barrier Reef, on which Captain Cook "laid for 23 hours" on 11th June 1770, over Lizard Island and Endeavour Reef and looked down at the spot where he beached his vessel just inside the Endeavour River, now modern Cooktown. Lockhart River itself is wide, sprawling and sluggish, and we touched down just beyond it on a modern firm strip, six hundred kms north of Cairns and about 250kms short of Cape York.

Andrew Haffenden, from G.O. Tours, Cairns, had sent equipment up by barge, and had our camp nicely set up in the Iron Range, about 25kms inland, on the banks of the Claudie River. Andrew assured us that he had swept the area clear of death adders and such noxious things, but within minutes of our arrival, one of us was stung twice on the knee by a large wasp, the most excruciating pain he had experienced. Then after tea as we set out spotlighting, an Amethystine Python, about eight feet long, slithered past our lean-to kitchen. The spotlight revealed a Spotted Cuscus above our camp, Little Flying Foxes feeding happily in figs, and Queensland Blossom Bats. Dingoes were calling in the distance and a Cape York Melomys, a small rat-like marsupial, ran along in front of us. Our zip-up netted tents were very satisfactory but surprisingly mosquitoes were few and far between.

The sharp cries of Palm Cockatoos and Eclectus Parrots all about the camp was a joyous sound to awaken to. There were a number of tracks leading through the tall timber and we walked six to ten kilometres morning and afternoon, with a short walk just after dawn, to arrive back in camp to a first class breakfast, served up by Cherie, a lass from Portland Roads, about 20kms further up the track. This is virtually the farthest north one can drive on the eastern shoreline, ending at Weymouth Bay. Here is a bronze plaque recalling Kennedy's ill-fated trip north, when he had to leave behind eight men,. This happened on 11th November, 1848 at Camp K LXXX. Several hills in the vicinity are called after the unfortunate men Carron, Wall, Taylor together with Kennedy Hill. Only two of the men were ultimately rescued, six weeks later.

About our camp the tall fig trees gave succour to Rainbow Lorikeets and Double eyed Fig Parrots. A magnificent Rifle Bird, truly magnificent with his iridescent green neck, played about here too. Whilst walking along the tracks, often a lovely Fairy-wren would be perched in the edging scrub, cobalt blue with chestnut flanks, only to be outdone by the delightful Red-backed Fairy-wren, with his crimson and black livery. There are two colorful pittas in this area, the red bellied one being particularly beautiful when one occasionally caught a full frontal view of him near the camp. His "Kwar-Kwar" call resounded all around us; we heard him more than we saw him. Another beautiful bird that was common around the area was the Buff-breasted Paradise-Kingfisher, often seen with his beautiful white tail streaming out behind him. Of the honeyeaters, eleven species were seen overall, the most common being the large Blue-cheeked Honeyeater and the Yellow-spotted Honeyeater, The Trumpet Manucode, one of Australia's birds of paradise, was seen quite often and there were multitudes of Metallic Starlings with their bright red eyes. It was interesting to find that even the experts found difficulty differentiating the screeching of Sulphur-crested Cockatoos and the Eclectus Parrots. White-faced Robins sat about the campsite, and in the near vicinity there were a number of species of flycatchers and monarchs.

After a very pleasant, but steamy, eight days, we returned to Lockhart River to catch our plane down to a drier area south-east of Musgrave Telegraph Station. A bonus was that our plane needed to pick up two people at Cape York, so en route we flew north to Bamaga, where the airfield is called after Jacky Jacky the faithful aboriginal who had accompanied Kennedy and who retrieved Kennedy's diaries after his master had been speared to death.

Our nest camp was at Mary-Vale Station, 93,000 acres, the edge of Lakefield National Park. In this dry country termite mounds abound and we were lucky enough to see upwards of twenty Golden-shouldered Parrots, which nest in the mounds. Red-winged Parrots were about, too and we came upon the decorated bower of the Great Bowerbird. On the nearby lagoon two Brolgas stepped delicately along, whilst the Wandering Whistling-ducks and the Radjah Shelducks eyed us off cautiously. Here it was for the first time I heard the booming notes of the Blue-winged Kookaburra, totally different from our familiar Jackey. Snakes were not numerous, there being a few Brown Tree Snakes seen. A Black-headed Python was handled, not too enthusiastically, by some of the group, and it nearly succeeded in squirming its jet black head out of the restraining hand of one of its admirers. Cane Toads were seen at Iron Range, but here at Mary-Vale they sat around us by the dozen at night, quietly devouring black beetles that came into the lamplight and dropped to the ground. The station folk have apparently accepted their presence - they probably haven't an alternative!

The flight back to Cairns got us there midmorning and straight after lunch Andrew had his minibus loaded to take us on a mammal excursion into the country behind Mareeba. We trekked in some distance to where he knew a Golden Bower-bird and its bower, and after some patient waiting a good view of the male bird was had. On the edge of Lake Eacham a Rat-tailed Kangaroo disported himself before us, and we had a good view of the Victoria Riflebird. A Spotted Catbird joined us for afternoon tea, and then we watched a platypus swimming about in the clear waters of the upper Barron river, little disturbed by our presence. At dusk near the crater west of Malanda, a family of Coppery Possums joined us for tea. Afterwards, standing with the spotlight in one place, the light could be shone onto a Green Possum, a deep brown and white Herbert River Possum, and a Lemuroid Possum. Another large Carpet Python was met, and also a slender black Small-eyed Snake, regarded as being quite venomous. Then it was back to the motel after midnight, and a relaxing flight home the next morning. A total of 180 bird species, and about fourteen species of mammals, had given us some wonderful viewing.

Joe Robinson
Mountjoy Road
Leopold

Birds of Darwin, N.T.

by Graham Dean

Darwin -a city we normally associate with crocodiles - has a lot to offer the bird observer. With its small population (one third the size of Geelong) in an area surrounded by wetlands and the rampant regrowth of tropical vegetation, native birds are evident right through the suburbs and into the city centre. For example, Mistletoebirds, Double-banded Finches and many types of honeyeaters abound in great numbers. There are no sparrows or starlings in Darwin - two made it overland from the south recently bit were quickly 'dealt with' by the Conservation authorities

On a recent visit we met Denise Goodfellow who for a modest fee conducts bird and nature tours around the area. She has a key to the sewerage ponds!

Denise is good value for she spends considerable time in the bush researching environmental impact for mining companies and is currently researching the breeding areas of the Gouldian Finch. Also her work with Aboriginal people has given her an educated insight into native foods and herbs - tasting a native fig or plum is quite delightful.

Denise and her husband Hilary Thompson have published an excellent book "Common Birds of the Darwin Area" - Sandpiper Productions, P.O. Box 39373 Winnelle, N.T. 5789. It contains data on 91 birds and considerable local habitat information. Accurate color paintings and sketches by Denise appear throughout the book.

Graham Dean

Spiders Make Me Laugh

by Louis N. Lane

Autumn is the season for spiders. Their webs are draped everywhere. An my small plot, there is an arachnid population of thousands but seven individuals have captured my imagination this year

There is a stanwellia who has made a mistake, a curled-leaf spider who refuses to do what his kith and kin have been doing for aeons and his dim-witted cousin, Mugwump; several adult cellana females waxing and waning while creating their egg-sacs; along with the smallest spiderling I have ever seen pretending to be a bird dropping. I found him perched in the apex of a bay-laurel leaf.

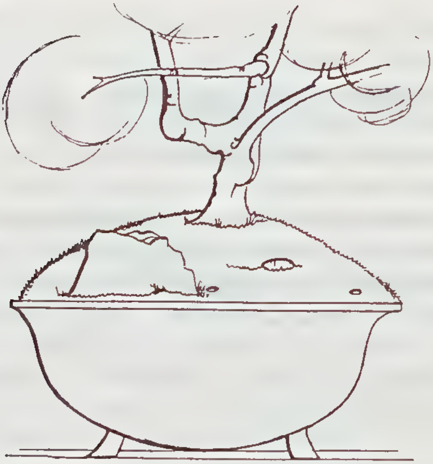
In the crouched position, with black and white legs tucked under, this midget would fit nicely in to a 3mm cube with room to spare. His three female relatives are going about the urgent business of spinning bunches of brown, spherical egg-cases with black, cryptic patterning. Two of them are in a camellia-shrub, suspending their nurseries under glossy leaves which will pitch off the rain water. Another independent cellana-Mum had gone broody sitting in full view right in the top of a heather-bush with no umbrella whatsoever. A bent-over twig of heather-bells doesn't afford much shelter. I guess the round, silk egg-cases are water-proof. So far, she has escaped the attention of the blackbirds which forage in my garden from sun-up to sun-down, helping themselves to the fruit of my vines and trees as well as gobbling worms, insects, etc.

The rebellious curled-leaf spider just hoisted up a vacant snail-shell and he lives in that. The half-witted Mugwump had absolutely no objection to curling a leaf; then he chose one so small that his mug can be seen at one end of the roll while his wump is exposed at the other.

The amusing stanwellis (funnel-web) spider had excavated her tunnel under thick moss in the pottery vase which houses my dwarfed, rough-barked leptospermum. There, 4cm for the gnarled melaleuca-trunk is her front door (about a centimetre in diameter) bordered with moss and draped, before the day dawns with a filmy "lid" of web. After dark, she lurks just within the portal from which she has removed the rain-curtain, waiting patiently for some unwary creature to pass by. Then she whips out like lightning and strikes her dinner with her poison-fangs.

There are two air-holes in the moss; one near the rock and one near the pottery rim. Two are probably necessary, if unusual, because the bonsai-bowl stands, perpetually, in a puddle of water. Even though stanwellias prefer a damp environment, this individual's underground quarters must be almost awash for the earth is a mere 13cm deep from the "hill" on which the melaleuca grows to the base of the bowl. A small mystery has been solved. Now I know why the beady-eyed blackbirds have been wrenching clumps of moss off this particular pot. I wonder whether blackbirds can detect the pheromone with which Madame Funnel-web Stanwellia attracts wandering suitors to her earthern shaft?

Louis N. Lane
Barkly St.
East Geelong



Stanwellia in a Bonsai-Vase

Answers to Junior Quiz.

1. *Buckleys* is Buckley(s) Falls, and *the Break* is the first Breakwater, and the book describes the history and natural history of the Barwon River as it flows through Geelong.
2. THe Wodoros, who were one of the groups of the Wathaurung people whose territory stretched from the Werribee River to Geelong, west to about 80km beyond Lake Corangamite and north-west to Ballarat. Later they became known as the Barrabool tribe.
3. They are cream in color, and bell shaped, and are followed by round purple fruits. The Tree Violet *Hymenanthera dentata* is very hardy and was widespread on the basalt plains in Western Victoria.
4. Eastern Water-rat and Platypus. Neither is now common in the river between Buckley Falls and the Breakwater.
5. The upstream migration of elvers and glass eels which swim up the river where they stay until they are mature.
6. From *Bell-bird Balyang* the name of the house which Geelong's first magistrate, Captain Foster Fyans, built on the river flat there.
7. Woorongo, which meant *A place of eels.* The escaped convict, William Buckley, went there with Surveyor Wedge, who named the falls after him.
8. At Balyang Sanctuary and in the old dead trees at the waterhole upstream of Princes Bridge.
9. Grayling, which is now classed as an endangered species.
10. At Balyang Sanctuary or at the Belmont Common. Australasian Grebes build a floating nest of vegetation. Later they carry their young on their backs while they swim.
11. Sandstones and mudstones which were laid down in a freshwater lake 135 million years ago. Fossil leaves have been found in the mudstone layers.
12. *Muehlenbeckia cunninghamii* is a shrub that forms tangled masses in the wetter areas beside the river.
13. It is a frog, also known as the Bull Frog or the Banjo Frog because of its distinctive mating call.
14. On an old River Red Gum just downstream from Princes Bridge, on the Newtown side. You might see a Mistletoebird there also. They eat the fruits and void the seeds on tree branches, where some germinate.
15. Under a rock near Buckley Falls. Dolomedes is a water spider which can walk on the water of submerge itself completely by covering itself with a bubble of air.
16. At balyang Sanctuary, where they roost in the tops of the trees on the island, and at Belmont Common where they roost on the ground at the edge of the water in the centre section.

Report of talk at General Meeting Nov. 1989 given by Judy Barker on the topic of Australian Asteracea

by Roy Whiteside

The main features of the talk were

1. A description of some varieties of daisies found in the Otways and Brisbane Ranges with others found in Western and Central Australia.
2. The work of the Daisy group of the Society for Growing Australian Plants (SGAP) in reclassifying plant species and the selection and treatment of flowers for display.

Judy Barker has been a member of the SGAP for 25 years and has been leader of the Waverley Group for 2 years and has been a member of the Daisy Study Group of the SGAP since its formation in 1981. Judy has shared the lecturing with other members for a period of three years. Each member has a special project on which they report at regular intervals. A book was published by the group in 1987 entitled "Australian Daisies for Gardens and Floral Art".

Judy provided at the meeting a comprehensive display of growing and cut daisy flowers from her garden and offered seeds and cutting material for GFNC members to grow. She explained that her study group is partly advancing floral art which involves drying, wiring and extending the range of flower species that can be used for floral art. The group would like Australia, rather than other countries to make money out of Australian flowers.

It was stressed that plants are not picked out of the bush for display but, where allowed, seeds are collected. For example, in the local area Mary White of the Angair group had allowed seeds to be collected from the Anglesea area and these had been grown to produce further seed which is sold and the proceeds help to run the study group.

Asteraceae is the new word used by botanists for the daisy family which was formerly known as Compositae and there are over 20,000 species of this family in the world. It is about the second largest family of flowering plants of which about 980 species grow in Australia. It is intended to grow all of the Australian species to see if they have horticultural potential. It has been found that germination of seed taken from the bush is often poor but subsequent seeds from the offspring the following year are considerably more viable. Cuttings of Asteraceae were easy to grow though Judy mainly propagates from seed.

A number of small plants of Brachyscome multifida, which is a project for study by one of the flower group members, were displayed at the meeting and we were informed that they are all easy to grow.

The increasing popularity of cottage gardens and the influence of the work of the daisy group has meant that more daisy plants have become available in nurseries in recent times.

For display purposes certain flowers can be painted with a colorless paint which helps to retain color and assists in preventing them form drooping, or wires are used as well. Other types of flower (e.g. Craspedias) can just be dried. Drying of everlastings is best done by hanging specimens upside down and it is preferable to pick flower heads whilst they are still in bud.

Judy has specialised in the study of Helichrysum apiculatum (Yellow Buttons or Common Everlasting) over the past three years and is attempting to classify this species which is found to have different forms of foliage in a number of different localities, When revised the name Helichrysum will be replaced by Chrysocephalum of which there will be about five groups. Helichrysum semipapposum has several forms with leaves of different shapes and different colors.

The 90 species of Australian Helipterum are being revised and will in future be renamed Hylasperma. The name Helipterum will be reserved for overseas species.

Slide Show

The talk proceeded with a comprehensive slide show to emphasize Judy's great liking for daisies.

Some spectacular initial slides showed a number of daisy species taken in three different habitats.

1. Helipterum jessenii (Orange Sunray) H. molle (Hoary or Soft Sunray) and H. floribundum (Common White Sunray) taken at McCulloch's Range in Western N.S.W. (between Wilcannia and Cobar)
2. Craspedia glauca var. alpina (Common Billy Buttons) occurring above the treeline in Victoria, the Craspedia family is being revised.
3. Helichrysum scorpioides (Button or Curling Everlasting) which has pale yellow flower heads and grey-green leaves and is found at Fairhaven.

Botany

A diagram showed a longitudinal section of a long daisy head comprising a composite of different sorts of flower (usually two) where each individual flower is called a floret. The outside ones are ray florets and the inner ones are disc florets which sit on a receptacle which is just an expanded stalk. They have two or three rows of involucral (i.e. ring) bracts (i.e. modified leaves at base of flower stalks)) which can be soft and green as in Brachyscomes or Olearias, or can be stiff, colorful and papery as in most the "Everlastings" which are devoid of ray florets.

The two types of flower of flower head were the Olearia type or Brachyscome type with ray florets with expanded corollas (collective term for petals) like a strap shape. The Everlastings instead of having the green involucral bracts have stiff colorful papery bracts and no ray florets. Two types were shown with just the floret where seeds are formed at the bottom of the corolla. The Brachyscome has the two types and the Helipterum also has two types with a few filiform florets on the periphery. The strap-shaped corolla is used by the pollinators to find their way into flowers for pollination. It fertilises the achene with the outside developing first towards the centre.

1. Terminal Single Head varieties

Microseris scapigera (Yam Daisy) has only strap-shaped ray florets; no tubular florets being present.

Brachyscome formosa has been renamed recently in place of the B. pilligia, Thus has two types of florets, the outer ray florets being cerise ones and the inner ones are disc-shaped.

Helipterum manglesii has cerise colored bracts on the outside with disc type florets only.

2. Clusters of heads

These have both ray and disc florets in Olearia phlogopappa or in Helichrysum semipapposum which grows at Grassy Creek. This has a cluster of heads and although it has the papery bracts that are not very obvious.

Helipterum humboldtianum (Clustered Everlasting) has obvious bracts and is an annual.

Leptorynchos scormatus has a head with inconspicuous green herbaceous bracts composed of disc florets which look like a button and is found at Anglesea.

Cephalipterum drummondii is an annual from WA which also has a compound head with conspicuous bracts.

to be continued

STATEMENT OF PURPOSES

1. To stimulate the study and appreciation of natural history by :-
   (a) Lectures, discussions and excursions to areas displaying features of ecological interest.
   (b) Taking part in ecological surveys and field studies.
2. To preserve and protect Australian flora and fauna.
3. To issue statements and comments on proposals regarding the management of areas of natural significance, so as to aid the conservation of natural resources and the protection of endangered species and habitats.
4. To faithfully record information, to disseminate knowledge on, and to act as a source of information and opinion on matters relevant to the Club's purposes.

SYLLABUS 1990/91

JUNE 1990

5 General meeting Phil De Geuslin. "Wetlands and the Dilemma of Bird Strikes on Power Lines"

9-11 Campout - Stuart Mill. Leader Dick Soutcombe (Ph. 43 3916)

12 Plant group meeting: "Kara Kara Vegetation" - Dick Southcombe

16 Saturday evening excursion, Spotlighting in the Upper Anakie Gorge. Leader Grant Baveerstock - (Phone 81 7256)

26 Bird Group meeting "Wetlands survey" - Ian Endersby

JULY

3 General meeting. Brendan Edgar - "Swan Bay and Wildlife planning"

10 Plant group meeting: "Basic Plant Identification" - Gwen Yarnold

15 Excursion. Pt. Lillias - Avalon Beach - Leader: Geoff Gaynor (Ph. 82 2182)

21-22 Boneseed Eradication & Birding at the You Yangs – Leader: Valda Dedman (Ph. 43 2374)

22 Junior Group excursion. Boneseed pulling & Bird watching. Leader: Grant Baverstock (Ph. 81 7256)

24 Bird Group meeting. "Red Goshawks" - David Baker-Gabb

AUGUST

7 Members night. Casserole Tea 6.00 p.m.
1. Valda Dedman & Geoff Gaynor - You Yangs
2. Gordon McCarthy - Inverleigh Common

14 Plant group meeting. "Basalt Plains Grasses" -Mark Trengrove

19 Excursion. Moggs Creek/Angahook Forest - Leaders: Dave King (Ph. 59 3023) and Pat Quinlivian (Ph. 43 0209)

28 Bird group meeting. "Peregrine Falcons" – Bill Emison

31-2 Sep. W.V.F.N.C.A. Campout – Wyperfield National Park

24 AUG 1990
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